

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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CONSULTATION ON NEW FORMS OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE

From March 29 - 31, approximately 60 leaders met for a Consultation on New Forms of Christian Service in this time of rapid social change. The Consultation was effectively organized by Japan Church World Service (see Feb.1, 1961 issue).

On the first day there were addresses by Dr. M. M. Thomas and Rev. Alan A. Brash of EACC, Prof. Mikio Sumiya of Tokyo University and Dr. Masao Takenaka of Doshisha Theological Seminary.

Dr. Thomas analyzed the new setting of service under the impact of rapid social change as being a transitional period where the traditional structures of Religion, Society and State are in varying stages of dissolution and are accompanied by destitution and demoralization. In this setting service has a long-range goal which may be called social action or Rehabilitation which involves the development of an alternative structure and a short-range goal which is called social service or relief which is concerned with relief of destitution, etc. A new factor in the Asian scene is the activity of the State in both the areas of social action and social service (i.e. the Welfare State). Dr. Thomas then outlined four lines along which Christian service needs reshaping. (1) New emphasis must be placed on "Christian participation in the search of the people for new political and social structures, new cultural values and new religious foundations." (2) Christian service must aid in the

development of "responsible participation in politics." (3) Now that most Christian institutions of service do not have a monopoly or pioneering character the emphasis must be on the "symbolism of Christian service." (4) Christian Service should remember the poor and in this way "symbolically demonstrate the love of God for the least'."

Rev. Brash noted the following ways in which Christian service has deviated from its intended meaning in the New Testament: Service is often considered as a means to an end; the form of service is not determined by the greatest need; a lack of unity among churches results in an overlapping or overlooking of some needs; and there is a lack of recognition of service as responsibility for the community as a whole. Also noted were the new insights and new emphasis on service in the Christian Church. First, the Division of Inter-Church Aid of WCC shows the willingness of Churches to pool resources in united service projects and in this way "helping one another in serving the world." Secondly, more effort is being exerted on programs such as vocational training in an attempt to help others help themselves. The limits and dangers of only "relief" are being recognized. Third, there has been a widening of the concept of Christian service; Christians are "called to be involved in the total life of their countries." Finally, the most important insight is the realization that we need to really care for the world, that it is the world that God so loved that He gave His only begotten Son.

Prof. Sumiya spoke on the positive approach of the Japanese Christians of the Meiji era to the rapid social change of that time. He noted that most social work, such as establishment of orphanages, aid to the poor, criminal rehabilitation and work with lepers, was initiated by Christians. There was also great activity in the field of education, especially for girls and young children, which contributed to the recognition of women by society. Also, in such areas as temperance, anti-prostitution and family-life morals the Christians led all movements. The pioneer work in labor unions and cooperatives was also undertaken by Christians. The Church, however, gradually lost its vision and church formation (kyokai keisei) became central. Christians became self-defensive as the church turned within itself. He called for a realization by the church of the changing needs of society.

Professor Masao Takenaka speaking on the "Theology of Diakonia" stressed the fact that Christian service is a response to Christ's ministry. Christians must understand Christ's acts of service better if they are to understand the theology of service. That Christ came as a servant, to serve and not to be served, is the uniqueness of Christ. He came to set men free. In Isaiah we have the image of Christ as a servant and in the New Testament we have Christ washing the feet of His disciples. Serving Christ includes serving others as well (John 12:26, Matt. 22:34-40, Matt. 25:40).

On the second day the participants were divided into four groups for study and discussion.. The first group attempted to analyse the present social structures and from this to gain an understanding of the present needs of men.. Means of service to develop a better society were discussed. The second group, recognizing that Christians have been active in various programs aiding those in need, noted that in these times of rapid social change there is a continued need for social work and welfare activities. The present social

problems and new forms of social service were studied. The third group stressed that Christian service should not be considered as only spiritual and material aid to those in dire need, but also must be directed toward the betterment of society as a whole. Character development is also a form of Christian service. The fourth group discussed the theological basis for service.

On the third and final day reports were made on the results of the groups discussions and then these were discussed by the group as a whole. These results are to be put in order and published by the planning committee. The recommendations will also be reported to the NCC executive committee which will deliberate on ways of application. The main resolutions and recommendations are as follows: (1) Christian service is our response to Christ's ministry, therefore, those who would live for Christ will recognize that to serve God is to serve men. Christian service should not be limited to "spiritualism" but should consider the economic, social and material needs of man. (2) Christians must study social science in order to grasp the true situation of this rapidly changing environment. There is a need here for an agency in NCC to analyze social problems and to send on this information to the churches. (3) Christian social work must not be utilized solely as a means of evangelism, it should rather be an act of love whereby Christ's love toward men is revealed. Service, a form of action, is a pantomime of faith. (4) There is a need for a more scientific approach to the understanding of service by the church. All areas, the theological, the psychological, the social scientific, the economic and the cultural must be studied and understood and then the church must lead in the development of healthy personalities. There may be a need for such agencies of scientific study in each constituent denomination and group.

CONFERENCE ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

When the Theological Education Fund (TEF) of the IMC was established in 1958 it was stated that the initial resources of the Fund were to be for a period of five years and that it was hoped that the Fund would continue. The initial five-year period ends in July 1963, therefore, if the IMC Assembly is to "review the operations and results of the Fund... with a view to a decision as to its continuance," it will have to be done at the New Delhi meeting in Nov. 1961. If this is not feasible the matter will be remitted to the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC which is meeting immediately after the New Delhi Assembly. Therefore, in order to give full consideration to the question at the TEF Committee meeting in New Haven in August 1961, a memorandum on the Future of the Theological Education Fund was sent to Secretaries of the member bodies of the IMC to elicit information regarding the prospect of future resources and opinions as to whether the continuation and extension of the Fund is desired.

The Conference on Theological Education held at International House in Tokyo was in response to this memorandum. Participants included the members of the Japanese Theological Education Conference, the chairman of which is Hidenobu Kuwada of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary, also 10 other representatives from seminaries, Kiyoshi Hirai and Kaname Tsukahara from Japan NCC, Dr. A.M. Ward, Honorary Consultant TEF Textbook Program and Dr. J.F. Hopewell, Associate Director TEF.

It was reported at the meeting that the General Assembly of the Japan NCC "approved in principle the hope that the Theological Education Committee may be continued." Under items for discussion it was noted that under the Theological Textbook Publication Program in Japan, which had received \$10,000 from the TEF, the first book to be published was E. Thurneysen's, *Die Lehre von der Seelsorge*. The translation was by Tsuneaki Kato, professor at Tokyo Union Theological Seminary, and the publisher was the United Church Publishing Department. Dr. Ward noted that this was the first book published under the total Textbook Publication Program. Dr. Ward also inquired as to whether it was possible to consider Commentaries as a new project. The Theological Education Conference will discuss this possibility at a meeting on May 18.

CONSULTATION ON CHURCH UNITY

The first post-war consultation on church unity was held at Atami from April 10 - 11 with approximately 30 in attendance.

On the first day, Dr. Keith R. Bridston, Executive Secretary of the WCC Commission on Faith and Order, outlined the historical background of the Faith and Order Commission and defined the "unity" toward which the Commission is working. He stressed the need for conversation, through which we shall eventually see our oneness in Christ. Also, on the first day, Dr. Kuwada, president of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary, spoke on the basic issues concerned with Church unity. He called for a return to the Bible, a humble return, in order to discover that our faith is one. Under the light of scripture we must reflect upon our various positions. Our divisions are a sign of the weakness of our faith.

In the discussion which followed the above addresses, a reaction to Dr. Kuwada's address was evident in the emphasis on the claim that each denomination was established under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and that their presence must be recognized. The problem of transfer of membership was also raised.

On the second day, Y. Mori, president of the Episcopal Central Theological College, in addressing the group on Worship Problems in Church Unity, explained the position of the Anglican-Episcopal church concerning inter-communion and full-communion as well as its non-recognition of the order of Protestant ministers, outside the historic episcopate. President Mori also observed that in Japan, where Christian tradition is short, the problem of communion is not so deeply felt as in Europe. He felt that it would be of value to study the problem from the Japanese viewpoint, for then it would be easier to step forward. He noted that especially in Japan there is a need for more conversation.

The presentation was followed by discussion on problems and suggestions presented by President Mori. The desire for annual, or if possible semi-annual, consultations of this type was expressed by all.

FIRST COOPERATIVE POLICY AREA-CONFERENCE

The Cooperative Policy Committee (CPC) of the Council of Cooperation, recently held the first of its sponsored series of local level "structured conferences" at Aoyama Gakuin in Tokyo on April 13.

The second conference will meet at Seibi Gakuin in Yokohama on April 17.

These "'structured confernces" are an extension and intensification of the freer and more general conferences of the past two years which have been attempting to achieve greater cooperation and understanding between the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan), Christian schools and Christian social work institutions, in order to work out a common basis among the aforementioned areas for a unified program of Christian witness. It is hoped that eventually these conferences will lead to the founding of local level Council of Cooperation type of bodies.

Dissatisfactions with the Council of Cooperation (COC) structure and especially with the gap between the churches and the schools resulted in the conferences of March, 1958 and November, 1959, where IBC deputations met with members of the COC to consult on ways of improving the situation. The reason for the gap between the church and schools rests to a great extent in the area of historical origins and development. Many of the schools were organized under the auspices of mission boards and have been receiving aid even though through the COC directly from them. The formation of the United Church did not bring about any fundamental change in the support of the schools. They continued to receive aid along denominational lines while the churches in North America were committed to the support of the Kyodan.

The Cooperative Policy Committee was created to carry out the recommendations in the Findings of the November Conference 1959. In these Findings, the IBC(NY) representatives reiterated the concern voiced at the 1958 March Conference over the primarily consultative role of the COC and called for a more aggressive planning body. The November Findings also included general agreement on the principle of 'Church to Church confrontation' in the relationship of COC and IBC." However, organizational changes were not to be pressed for the present, because of the situation of the schools and social work institutions.

Thinking and action concerning the nature and function of the COC has now progressed to where the three COC sub-committees, the Cooperative Evangelism Committee(CEC), the Cooperative Education Committee(CEdC) and the Cooperative Social Work Committee (CSWC), have been absorbed into the Kyodan's Evangelism Committee, the Association of Christian Schools as representative of the schools in the COC, - and the Christian Social Work League (CSWL), respectively. The question of whether the COC should be a more aggressive planning body has received some reconsideration. It has been observed that with the abolishing of the three COC sub-committees, the responsibility for aggressive planning is placed on the church, the Education Association of Christian Schools and the Christian Social Work League, "where it properly belongs." However, the "authority or power" of the Education Association to occupy such a position has been questioned and the attempt is being made to replace the Education Association, which includes schools with no relation to the Kyodan, with some kind of Kyodan-Related Council. Here, the problem is how to define the term "Kyodan-Related." Concerning the function and role of the COC, it has also been suggested that the appropriate role of the COC is not to make plans, but rather to insist that careful plans be submitted by the member bodies as

the basis for the 'overall' decisions which the COC must make in relation to the IBC." This would involve a guidance and correlative role rather than veto power.

A YEAR WITH THE 'GROUP SEEDS'

The Japan Commission on Christian Literature (NCC) reported the inaugural meeting of the GROUP OF SEEDS (Tane no Kai) in the April 1, 1960, issue of the JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS. Its announced purpose at that first meeting, on March 26, was to become a study group composed of men and women who would consciously seek to produce literature of high merit and witness positively to Christ through their art.

Since its formation, the whole group, numbering 25 people plus observers, has met once each month at the Christian Center in Tokyo. In addition, three sub-groups (Novels, Criticism and Drama) also have met regularly each month. Rinzo Shiina, well-known Japanese novelist, and Professor Junichiro Sako, literature critic, have served as leaders of the total group.

One of Shiina's novels, Ai no Shōgen (The Witness of Love), which was written after Shiina had abandoned existentialism for Christianity, will appear next month (May 1961) in English translation, under the imprint of Heinemann's of London, with the title, FLOWERS HAVE FALLEN. Other translations of this book, made from the English, will be published shortly in Finland, Norway, West Germany and The Netherlands.

Professor Sako's works have been collected and are being issued by Shinjusha, a Tokyo publishing firm, in eight volumes. This is a noteworthy event. Previously, only two or three Japanese critics have thus had their works recognized by being published as a whole.

During the past 12 month period these people have criticized each other's works and have also studied together the works of Albert Camus and those of the Japanese Roman Catholic novelist, Shusaku Endo. Convinced that the 'Barthianism' of Japanese Protestantism has looked with suspicion upon the world of letters and, in general, has shied away from contacts with the whole realm of culture, the 'GROUP OF SEEDS' has deliberately set itself upon a path which would lead away from such 'Barthianism' toward direct encounter within the areas of human literary achievement. The group believes that only in this way can effective Christian witness be made.

Nevertheless, there are dangers and these are recognized. At present the GROUP OF SEEDS is studying 12 leading Japanese novelists whose works span from the Meiji Period to the present. These 12 men all were either themselves Christian or were profoundly influenced by the Christian faith. Yet all but two of these talented authors ultimately came to preject Christianity. The purpose of this extended study is to find out why. The 12 writers under consideration are Roka Tokutomi, Toson Shimazaki, Doppo Kunikida, Tokoku Kitamura, Himei Iwano, Shoko Kinoshita, Takeo Arishima, Naoya Shiga, Hakuchō Masamune, Bocho Yamamura, Ryunosuke Akutagawa and Osamu Dazai.

The NCC Commission on Christian Literature cooperated with the GROUP OF SEEDS in holding a Summer Writers' Institute at the Hoshino Onsen in Naka Karuizawa, from July 21 - 23, 1960. Lecturers and

resource personnel, in addition to Shiina and Sako, included Mr. Junko Takamizawa, renowned playwright, Miss Reiko Matsuoka, Radio-TV scenarist, and Junichiro Kuniya, professor of philosophy at the Meiji University, in Tokyo. Sixty Christian writers, from all parts of Japan, participated in the Institute.

(Rev. Howard Huff)

